

small and hungry band of soldiers was against the army of a great empire. Many in that empire considered July the 4th, 1776, to be just another day on the calendar. Yet, America's Founders knew that something very important had happened that day, something new and hopeful in the course of human events.

They called the American experiment a "new order of the ages." The time has confirmed their belief. The Colonies became a country. The people of America crossed a continent, and the ideals that created America have crossed the globe.

This history we celebrate today is a testament to the power of freedom to lift up a whole nation. And we still believe, on America's 228th birthday, that freedom has the power to change the world.

May God bless you, and may God bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:57 p.m. at the West Virginia State Capitol Grounds. In his remarks, he referred to Sam Hindman, former publisher, Charleston Daily Mail; Maj. Gen. Allen E. Tacket, adjutant general, West Virginia National Guard; Gen. Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong, USAF, commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe, commander, Allied Air Forces Northern Europe, and air component commander, U.S. European Command; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Rev. Shawn R. Thornton, senior pastor, Bible Center Church, Charleston, WV; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government.

Remarks Following a Discussion With Prime Minister David Oddsson of Iceland and an Exchange With Reporters

July 6, 2004

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of Iceland to the Oval Office.

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for coming.

I'll have an opening statement. He'll have an opening statement. We'll answer a couple of questions.

I remember my first NATO meeting, and I walked in, and the person who greeted me and made me feel most at home was my friend here. And I've never forgotten that. Iceland has been a steady friend of the United States of America, and they have been an important friend.

We had an interesting discussion on some important issues, and it was a frank discussion. And that's what you expect among friends. It was open and honest. And the Prime Minister is a person who cares deeply about the security of his country and the welfare of his people, and that's

why he's been such an effective leader for the good people of Iceland.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

Prime Minister Oddsson. Thank you so much, Mr. President. I'm very happy to be here, not least on the President's birthday. It's a privilege.

President Bush. Thank you for remembering.

Prime Minister Oddsson. Well, we discussed some things—I will make two points. You had just recently, a week ago, in a NATO meeting in Istanbul, a very good meeting, I think, not least because of the firm leadership of the President and his open manner, his easy-speaking manner that everybody understands when he speaks. And he changed the atmosphere inside NATO for the better. The past is behind us. People are united to a future. Secondly, we had the opportunity to discuss the defense issues in Iceland, which is very

important to us. And the President is looking on that in a positive way. But of course, he has to see the issue from all sides. This was a fruitful discussion about the future. Thank you.

President Bush. Yes.

A couple of questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

2004 Election

Q. Mr. President, the Republican National Committee says that John Edwards is disingenuous, inexperienced, and unaccomplished. I wonder, do you agree with that? Is that the tone that you want to set in talking about—

President Bush. Listen, I welcome Senator Edwards on the ticket. The Vice President called him early this morning to say—after the announcement was made—to say that he welcomes him to the race, and as do I. And I look forward to a good, spirited contest.

Have you got somebody from your press corps?

Prime Minister Oddsson. Okay. From Iceland somewhere?

Iceland-U.S. Defense Relations

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, did you reach an agreement on the defense treaty with Iceland?

Prime Minister Oddsson. That was never—the meeting—was to have an agreement. Now, today I had the opportunity to explain my view of the issue to the President, and he is looking into my position and the Iceland position, but he had an open mind.

President Bush. Yes. Let me comment on this, about—this is an issue related to the F-15s, for the American press. We've got four F-15 fighters stationed there. The Prime Minister pressed very hard for us to keep the fighters there. He was very eloquent, very determined that the United States keep the troops there. And I told him, I said I'm open-minded about the subject. I want to make sure I understand the

full implications of the decision as to whether or not to leave them there. And we will gather more information. He is going to provide information about the basing there in Iceland and the requirements there. I will talk to the respective departments here, and I will make a measured judgment as to the finality of this issue.

I told the Prime Minister I'm—I appreciate our alliance. I appreciate his friendship. I fully understand the arguments he's made, and we will work together to solve the issue.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters], where are you?

Central Intelligence Agency

Q. Here, sir. Thank you. There's a story today that the CIA held back information from you that Iraq had abandoned its WMD programs. Is that true? And what's your timetable on nominating a new CIA director? Are you going to wait until after the election?

President Bush. I haven't made up my mind on the nomination process. Secondly, I will wait for the report, the Senate report, to come out. This is information from the report of the United States Senate, Chairman Roberts' committee. I will look at the whole report.

I will tell you, however, that I know that Saddam Hussein was a threat. He was a threat to the neighborhood. He was a threat to the people of Iraq. He harbored terrorists. Mr. Zarqawi, who continues to kill and maim inside of Iraq, was in the country prior to our arrival. Saddam Hussein had the intent. He had the capability. And the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. And the world will be more peaceful when this Iraqi Government, under Prime Minister Allawi, emerges and there are elections.

And that's what we're seeing. We're seeing a transformation in a part of the world that needs liberty and freedom. And so I look forward to the full report, and I'll react to it when I see it.

Anybody else?

Prime Minister Oddsson. Well, I just—on this, I must say I agree with the President about Iraq. The future of Iraq is—the future of the world is much better because of the undertaking that the United States, United Kingdom, and their alliances took there. And without that done, the situation in that area of the world would be much more dangerous than it is now. There's hope now. There was no hope before.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

[At this point, all present sang “Happy Birthday” to the President.]

President Bush. Thanks. You actually call that singing? [Laughter] No, it was beautiful.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zargawi; and Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government.

Message to the Congress Transmitting Legislation To Implement the United States-Australia Free Trade Agreement July 6, 2004

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit legislation and supporting documents prepared by my Administration to implement the United States-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This Agreement adds an important dimension to our bilateral relationship with a steadfast ally in the global economic and strategic arena. This FTA will enhance the prosperity of the people of the United States and Australia, serve the interest of expanding U.S. commerce, and advance our overall national interest.

My Administration is committed to securing a level playing field and creating opportunities for America's workers, farmers, and businesses. The United States and Australia already enjoy a strong trade relationship. The U.S.-Australia FTA will further open Australia's market for U.S. manufactured goods, agricultural products, and services, and will promote new growth in our bilateral trade. As soon as this FTA enters into force, tariffs will be eliminated on almost all manufactured goods traded between our countries, providing significant export opportunities for American manufac-

turers. American farmers will also benefit due to the elimination of tariffs on all exports of U.S. agricultural products.

The U.S.-Australia FTA will also benefit small- and medium-sized businesses and their employees. Such firms already account for a significant amount of bilateral trade. The market opening resulting from this Agreement presents opportunities for those firms looking to start or enhance participation in global trade.

In negotiating this FTA, my Administration was guided by the negotiating objectives set out in the Trade Act of 2002. The Agreement's provisions on agriculture represent a balanced response to those seeking improved access to Australia's markets, through immediate elimination of tariffs on U.S. exports and mechanisms to resolve sanitary and phytosanitary issues and facilitate trade between our countries, while recognizing the sensitive nature of some U.S. agricultural sectors and their possible vulnerability to increased imports.

The U.S.-Australia FTA also reinforces the importance of creativity and technology to both of our economies. The Agreement